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Creating Sites for Connection in the Classroom: Dialogism as a Pedagogy for Active Learning

Melissa A. Broeckelman

“That education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory.”

~John Dewey,

Democracy and Education (1916/1966, p. 38)

When it comes to the way that most public speaking classes are taught, these words ring as true today as they did when they were first written over ninety years ago. Communication theory continues to advance, and research has given new insight into methods that help students learn. Yet, Sprague (1993, 2002) argues that the communication discipline, as a whole, has failed to incorporate its advances in theory into the methods by which communication courses are taught, that “we have not concentrated enough attention on the intersection of content and pedagogy” (2002, p. 327), and that we need to begin finding ways to incorporate our advances in theory into our university classrooms. Since both the form and content of the introductory public speaking course should be based in good communication practices, this class should be one of the first sites for practicing advances in communication theory. Public speak-

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ing pedagogy would benefit from greater connections to communication theory, and in this essay, I argue that Bakhtin's dialogism is a good starting point for developing effective theory-based teaching strategies.

In describing one of the central concepts of dialogism, Mikhail Bakhtin (1929/2001, p. 1215) said, "A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee." With these words, he was acknowledging the importance of both the speaker and the listener in attributing meaning to what is said. Just as both ends must simultaneously exert upward force on the physical bridge to keep it in place and allow constant traffic back and forth, both the addresser and the addressee must simultaneously contribute to the creation of meaning in order for shared understanding of the message to occur. Without mutually constructed and shared meaning, true communication cannot be achieved.

The purpose of a public speaking course is to help students learn to communicate clearly and effectively, which requires establishing shared understanding of meaning. However, processes to help students develop this mutual understanding and to make sure that the message intended is the message received are rarely incorporated into such courses. Textbooks talk about the importance of audience analysis, and as instructors we might give our class time to fill out surveys or ask students to write peer evaluations as classmates give their speech performances. Despite this provision, public speaking courses rarely include opportunities for students to interact meaningfully with one another or to receive responsive feedback from each other or from

their instructors during the speech development process to ensure that the message interpreted by the audience is the same as the one that the speaker is trying to convey. I examined twelve well-known public speaking textbooks to ascertain whether any included mention of dialogue during speech development, (Beebe & Beebe, 2002; DeVito, 2000; Goulden & Schenck-Hamlin, 2002; Jaffe, 2004; Kearney & Plax, 1996; Lucas, 2001; McKerrow, Gronbeck, Ehninger, & Monroe, 2003; Nelson & Pearson, 1981; Osborn & Osborn, 1991; Sellnow, 2003; Verdeber & Verdeber, 2003; Zarefsky, 2003), and found that none included any mention of peer workshops or of seeking feedback from others during the speech preparation process.

If applied to the classroom, dialogic theory would use various forms of classroom interaction (i.e., dialogue) so that students can practice meaning-making in a dynamic social community of peers. In so doing, students would learn and reinforce the theoretical material that is part of the course content while simultaneously integrating traditional skills associated with public speaking and oral expression. The purpose of this essay is to familiarize basic course instructors with dialogism and to prescribe specific techniques for incorporating the practice of dialogism into public speaking pedagogy that could improve students' retention and understanding of course material and help students develop better speeches. However, these ideas can also be adapted for other courses, such as hybrid, small group, or interpersonal communication classes. To develop a technique for using dialogic theory as pedagogy, this essay overviews the theory, discusses its relationship to learning, and

considers specific strategies for incorporating dialogue as a pedagogical strategy in the basic course.

DIALOGIC THEORY

Dialogism contends that a message or utterance is not just a product of the speaker, but is instead co-constructed between speakers as a product of the specific socio-historical context in which it is situated (Bakhtin, 1981; Bakhtin, 1953/2001; Bakhtin, 1929/2001; Bialostosky, 1999; Bizzel & Herzberg, 2001; Ewald, 1993; Stewart, 1978; Todorov, 1984; Zappen, 2004). Dialogism was most thoroughly developed in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin in twentieth century Russia, but is also grounded in the ideologies of Marx (1859/1992), Buber (1956, 1970), and other philosophers in this time period as a reaction to some of the stricter notions of structural linguistics (e.g., Saussure, 1913/1992) and Russian formalism (e.g., Trotsky, 1924/1992). Three of the key components that form the core of his dialogic theory that should be considered in relation to the basic public speaking course include the following: (a) Dialogue, not monologue, is the most natural form of human speech, (b) Meaning exists as a collaborative construct between speakers, and (c) The context or social situation determines meaning.

First, dialogue, not monologue, is the most natural form of human speech. Lev Petrovich Yakubinsky (1923/1997), whose writings anticipated Bakhtin's more comprehensive study of dialogic interaction (Eskin, 1997), observed that people do not have to be trained to

interrupt, but they do have to be trained to listen. Yakubinsky notes:

Three moments are crucial here: first, that any stimulus or force naturally elicits a reaction from the affected organism; second, that ideas, judgments, and emotions are closely linked to their verbalization; finally, that speech action can elicit speech reaction, which may become reflexive. Just as a question almost involuntarily and naturally gives birth to an answer (owing to the constant association of thought and speech), any verbal stimulus stirs up thoughts and emotions and inevitably solicits a verbal reaction by the affected organism. (p. 249)

For Bakhtin, dialogue is a responsive process that exists because everyone is participating in some capacity or role. In dialogue, everyone must participate in the construction and understanding of meaning without trying to mold utterances into an established hierarchical form. Conversation, as a chain of linguistic signs, continuously moves back and forth between speakers, “and this chain of ideological creativity and understanding... is perfectly consistent and continuous.... This ideological chain stretches from individual consciousness to individual consciousness, connecting them together” (Bakhtin, 1929/2001, p.1212).

When we consider the implications of this conceptualization of communication for the basic public speaking course, it does not mean that we should do away with speech assignments in which one student gives an uninterrupted presentation for his or her classroom audience. Rather, we should resituate the speech presentation and recognize that it is part of this ongoing linguistic chain; it is an utterance that is responding to utter-

ances that have come before it and that will be responded to by future utterances. For example, a student who gives a speech about living wills might be doing so in response to recent media coverage of the Terri Schiavo case and is entering the much larger social dialogue that is likely to continue for some time. A speech focused on Schiavo would prompt cognitive, attitudinal, and/or behavioral responses in others (whether immediate or delayed, direct or indirect), which would in turn prompt responses in others, which would prompt responses in others, and so on.

In addition to maintaining the use of speaking assignments, dialogism also allows for public speaking to be considered distinct from other types of utterances. Czubaroff (2000) points out that Buber discusses three forms of dialogue across his writings: technical dialogue, one-way dialogical relations, and fully mutual dialogic relations. While a fully mutual dialogic relation might be the ideal, speech performances are most likely to be technical or one-way dialogue. Furthermore, Bialotsky (1999) explains that for Bakhtin, there was a difference between the “what is once-occurrent” act and the “once and for all act” (p. 16). The “once-occurrent” acts are the rough drafts of a composition, or in public speaking, the rough draft outlines of speeches that are being revised. The “once and for all” act is the final composition or speech presentation. However, as Bialotsky points out, “What is at stake [in a once and for all act] is not getting the last word but *saying something*, actualizing an answerable act or word and waiting for the answers to it rather than languishing in indecision among contingent possibilities of action and utterance” (p. 17, emphasis in original).

This chain of ideas that connects consciousnesses is helpful for understanding the second component of dialogism: *meaning in language exists as a collaborative construct between speakers*. This is related to Mead (1934), Blumer (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2004), and Berger & Luckmann's (1967) symbolic interactionism and social construction of reality, but is focused more on the meaning perceived in the language than on the meaning attributed to "reality." However, in speech, the idea or meaning that the speaker is trying to convey through language and the idea or meaning interpreted by the listener are rarely identical. Since the message or utterance is shared between the two, the meaning or theme must be said to exist between the two, not just as a product of either the speaker or the listener. Therefore, the meaning must reside in the linguistic sign. However, because signs are not inherently meaningful (are arbitrary in nature), but instead have ideology imbued on them by the speakers who use them in specific contexts, the meaning (or signified) must constantly be negotiated by the speakers through dialogue so that the meaning (theme) is shared and can accurately convey ideologies. Thus, the theme of any utterance is shaped by both speakers in the dialogue. The meanings of words are determined both by the giver and the receiver. As Bakhtin argues, "In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As a word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*" (1929/2001, p. 1215, emphasis in original). This implies that the meaning or ideology does not actually reside in

either person, but instead in the signs that serve as the medium of communication between the two.

Because meaning cannot exist without both members of the dialogue, greater emphasis must be placed on the “other.” Martin Buber (1956) philosophized about moments of full mutually shared meaning, and said that such moments of complete reciprocal relation can only exist if the rhetor communicates his authentic self without “seeming,” if the rhetor affirms and confirms the other person as he truly is, and if both participants respond genuinely to and confirm one another in dialogue. While this might seem to be an impossible ideal to achieve in a classroom public speaking situation, the goal should be to move as close to this end of the continuum as possible by encouraging and enacting genuine responses to and through student work. Even if the other is not physically present or immediately responding in the dialogue, as could be the case in written discourse or certain public address situations, the speaker/writer must imagine the other’s reality and seek to create genuine conversation with that imagined universal or particular audience (Czubaroff, 2000; Gross, 1999). Language conveys meaning in its most confirming manner when it is directed toward an *other* that is perceived as *Thou*, not as *It*.

In the basic public speaking course, we can emphasize the collaborative construction of meaning by highlighting the role and importance of the audience. As speakers, students should be encouraged to consider their audience’s attitudes, beliefs, and values. Furthermore, we should give students the opportunity to interact with and respond to each other while they are developing their speeches so that the speech performance can

anticipate and respond to the audience's responses. As audience members, students should be encouraged to think more critically about the ideas presented in their classmates' speeches and about the means by which their classmates are conveying those ideas. We need to incorporate structures through which students can respond to one another during the speech development process as well as during the speech performance. Furthermore, as instructors, we should seek to offer responsive feedback to students before, during, and after the speaking performance.

Finally, the words shared as signs between people cannot, in and of themselves, hold meaning. Words have different meanings that depend on the context in which they are used, so they cannot exist with any significance outside the specific social context in which they are used. This is why it is important to understand the third component of dialogism: *the context or social situation in which the sign is used determines meaning*.

In *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, published originally under the name Volshinov, Bakhtin (qtd. in Todorov, 1984) contends:

"There is no human being outside society, and therefore not outside objective socioeconomic conditions [...]. A human being is not born in the guise of an abstract biological organism, but as a landowner or peasant, a bourgeois or proletarian, and that is of the essence. Then, he is born Russian or French, and finally he is born in 1800 or 1900. Only such a social and historical localization makes man real, and determines the content of his personal and cultural creation." (p. 30-31)

Just as human beings cannot exist abstractly outside a very specific socio-historical cultural context, it is impossible for messages constructed between them to exist outside that same social context. And just as humans are influenced by the social context in which they find themselves, the messages they co-construct are also influenced by and are a product of that social context. As Bakhtin says, “*The immediate social situation and broader social milieu wholly determine—and determine from within, so to speak—the structure of an utterance*” (1929/2001, p. 1215, emphasis in original). Any given utterance is a response to the utterances that preceded it and shapes the utterances that will follow in response. All utterances are responses to a concrete situation of persons and objects and should be understood as such (Bialostosky, 1999). Bakhtin (1981) says, “It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape” (p. 276). Therefore, from a dialogic perspective, all communication should be seen as a part of an active process of responsive understanding.

In the public speaking course, acknowledging the collective nature of authorship and recognizing that a speech performance is a response to the ideologies, events, and people in a specific context situated in a certain time and place is important. Ideas and language do not occur in a vacuum; they are products of people who are products of interaction in particular environments, political structures, relationships, and experiences. Thus, every speech performance is as much a product of others who are influencing the speaker as it is a product of the speaker, and every speech is both acting upon and

reacting to the immediate context. Furthermore, we should go beyond acknowledging the influence of interaction and actually incorporate structures that allow and encourage collaboration in the classroom. Dialogism will increase shared understanding of meaning, which will ultimately allow students to gain a more thorough understanding and internalization of the theoretical concepts and will allow them to utilize and practice that knowledge in public speaking performances.

PHILOSOPHIES OF LEARNING

Though dialogic theory alone warrants the incorporation of more responsive interaction in the classroom, other theorists and researchers lend further support to the claim that learning will be enhanced by the use of such teaching methods. Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986), a psychologist who has been influential in cognitive development and learning theory, argued that knowledge can be reconstructed and co-constructed between people through dialogic interactions in social spaces that he refers to as *zones of proximal development*, or ZPDs (John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000). Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) summarize Vygotsky's theory into the following four assertions:

1. We first learn through interaction with other people and their cultural artifacts (on the interpsychological plane), then appropriate that learning within our selves (on the intrapsychological plane).
2. Learning through social interaction occurs in a process known as *scaffolding*, in which more cul-

turally knowledgeable experts mentor and engage in activity with less experienced or knowledgeable people. This is a reciprocal process, and “meaning is thus constructed through joint activity rather than being transmitted from teacher to learner” (p. 2).

3. When constructing meaning, individuals draw on artifacts (concepts, content knowledge, strategies, and technologies) that are constructed historically and culturally and that connect them to cultural history in everyday life. Thus, whether or not others are physically present, learning is inherently social, and “language becomes the primary medium for learning, meaning construction, and cultural transmission and transformation” (p. 2).
4. The capacity to learn constantly shifts and is dependent on (a) what the individual already knows, (b) “the nature of the problem to be solved or the task to be learned,” (c) “the activity structures in which learning takes place,” (d) “the quality of this person’s interaction with others” (p. 2).

Since context and capacity are both important as learning occurs in ZPDs, Vygotsky argues that “teaching should extend the student beyond what he or she can do without assistance, but not beyond the links to what the student already knows” (Lee and Smagorinsky, p. 2). To summarize more succinctly, students learn more when they are learning with and from each other through interaction and when they are learning through experiences in their everyday lives.

Likewise, Dewey (1916/1966) argues that we learn through experience, interaction, and practice, not just from books and lectures. He says, "Schools require for their full efficiency more opportunity for conjoint activities in which those instructed take part, so that they may acquire a *social* sense of their own powers and the materials and appliances used" (p. 40, emphasis in original). He emphasizes, "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think" (p. 160). Bruner (1996) further explains, "Acquired knowledge is most useful to a learner, moreover, when it is 'discovered' through the learner's own cognitive efforts, for it is then related to and used in reference to what one has known before" (p. XII in Preface). This suggests that education should involve more hands-on experience that allows students to make more clear connections between the theoretical material and their actual activities and should utilize structures in which students work together and learn from each other in a collaborative classroom environment.

Howe and Strauss (2000) point out that many elementary and secondary schools now use collaborative and cooperative teaching methods, which are a formalized way to bring dialogic learning into the classroom. Collaborative learning methods are less often utilized in college classrooms, but Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998b) reviewed over 305 studies that examined cooperative learning in college and adult settings and found that such teaching practices are correlated with higher individual achievement, increased liking among students, higher self-esteem, improved social skills, and more positive attitudes about learning and the college

experience. Furthermore, Wells (2000) contends that the transmission approach to education is no longer appropriate and that it should be replaced by a collaborative approach in which the curriculum is a means, not an end, and in which students can co-construct knowledge together through purposeful activities. Bereiter (1994, in Wells, 2000) adds that we need to emphasize a “*progressive discourse*,” which is a “process by which the sharing, questioning, and revising of opinions leads to ‘a new understanding that everyone involved agrees is superior to their own previous understanding’” (pp. 72-73, emphasis in original). Since Vygotsky, Dewey, Bruner, and Johnson, Johnson, and Smith would all agree that students learn best and gain greater shared understanding through interaction and experience, we have even greater support for incorporating dialogic teaching methods into the classroom.

STRATEGIES FOR THE BASIC PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE

Despite our endorsement of dialogism as an important theory that can shape the way we as a discipline understand our relationships and communication with others, we rarely incorporate dialogic theory into the teaching of the basic public speaking course. Anecdotally, arguments have been made that each teacher has his or her own style that works best in their classrooms, that getting everyone in class to participate is difficult, and that the graduate teaching assistants who teach public speaking at many universities simply do not have the preparation or experience required to incorporate

effectively more dialogic or cooperative teaching methods.

Even so, by relying largely on a body of research in composition studies that had already explored the practical effects of utilizing dialogical theory in the pedagogy of writing courses, I developed a system of dialogic teaching methods for the introductory public speaking course at Kansas State University. This four-part system was pilot tested in fall 2004 and implemented across nearly all sections of the course in spring 2005 (Broeckelman, 2005). After only a single semester of implementation, we found a statistically significant increase in the final exam scores, $t = -7.90$ (2149), $p < .05$, between the control group ($M = 78.18$, $SD = 9.96$) and the experimental group ($M = 81.57$, $SD = 9.52$). On open and closed ended survey items, course instructors indicated that the students who participated in the dialogic learning methods outlined below gave better speeches, learned more, were more confident, and put more effort into their speeches. Despite comments expressing a need for more time, all but two of the GTAs said that they would continue to use all of these teaching strategies in their future courses if they were given the choice of whether or not to do so. Since then, instructors teaching in at least two other universities have begun to implement components of this system in their courses, which indicates that these ideas can be adapted to meet the needs of specific classroom contexts.

Rather than believing that it is too difficult or impossible to implement such teaching methods, I suspect that one of the reasons that such teaching methods may not be implemented is that teachers need examples and strategies that can be used as a beginning framework.

Based on the successful program implemented at Kansas State University, I propose four specific strategies that can be implemented separately or together, as was the case in the aforementioned study. They include (a) detailed grading rubrics, (b) instructor feedback prior to performance, (c) peer workshops, and (d) peer evaluations.

Detailed Grading Rubrics

If used as a starting point for conversation about assignment expectations throughout the speech development process, grading rubrics that explicitly outline grading criteria and allow space for responsive comments can foster a more dialogic learning approach. To foster dialogism, the instructor should share the grading rubric with students when the speech is first assigned, use it to help explain the speech requirements, and solicit student questions about any uncertainties. Students should be encouraged to use the rubrics as a checklist to evaluate their own work before turning in assignments and as a guide for discussion in peer workshops.

The same rubrics should be used to provide feedback to the student and assign a grade after the speech is complete, and teachers should take care to respond concretely to student work and create even greater understanding of the course material and its applications. As Booth-Butterfield (1989) points out, rubrics can help provide students with direction for revisions, help teachers give more clear critiques, and help students critically evaluate their own work through a better understanding of the criteria that determine the quality of

a performance. Clear critiques with detailed, objective feedback help students take responsibility for their presentation and use the feedback to help improve future performances, which can help students see how their speeches fit into Bakhtin's ongoing "chain of ideological creativity and understanding" (1929/2001, p. 1212). Thus, the instructor should take special care to respond genuinely to the product in a Buberian sense (whether it is a written composition or a speech presentation), and thereby to the person as well.

While this process and the feedback it can generate are the most important considerations when using grading rubrics to foster classroom dialogue, care should also be taken when designing the rubric. To be most effective, rubrics should be revised to fit the actual characteristics of each assignment and context (Crank, 1999) and should be shared with and explained to students when the assignment is first introduced (Jackson & Larkin, 2002). Jackson and Larkin provide a number of suggestions for writing rubrics including: (a) use descriptive language, define terms used in the rubric, articulate gradations of quality, and ask students to interpret and clarify the criteria used; (b) define gradations of quality in measurable and observable terms with definite distinctions and equal point values distributed between each; and (c) define meanings of and directions for achieving all possible total scores.

Instructor Feedback Prior to Performance

A second strategy for incorporating dialogic teaching approaches into the basic public speaking course is to give instructor feedback prior to the public speaking

performance. By giving students written comments on outlines, instructors can respond to their students' work during the speech development process and give the students another chance to respond to the instructor's comments through revisions made before the final speaking performance. This practice allows the instructor to give students specific suggestions that will bring their work into even closer alignment with the assignment expectations. Meanwhile, it also allows the instructor to individualize instruction and give students feedback that will help push them to the next level of understanding, as Vygotsky (1978, 1986) suggests, regardless of the students' differing levels of expertise and experience.

This individualized feedback provides an opportunity to bring teacher immediacy into the process and helps the student have a more positive experience of the speech development process. Titsworth (2000) found that praise increases students' levels of state motivation and affect toward the course and instructor, and such comments offer an opportunity to praise students for what they are doing well. Marshall and Violanti (2005) found that students who had individual online conferences with instructors about their speeches felt more prepared and had greater satisfaction with the class, instruction, and perceived learning. We should expect similar results for feedback on outlines because the comments are specifically directed toward individual students and their speech assignments rather than directed generally toward an entire class.

Further, this feedback can help the instructor check to make sure that the student did not misunderstand the assignment and might help alleviate student appre-

hension about giving the speech by reassuring them that their work is meeting the expectations (Ellis, 1995). Puhr and Workman (1992) recommend keeping grading out of the writing process for as long as possible to encourage students to continue to revise and improve their work. They argue this is one way that instructors can provide this valuable feedback without “officially” evaluating the students’ work. Typically, students are often more apprehensive and therefore less able to respond to feedback when they are being evaluated for a grade (Ayres & Raftis, 1992; Richmond & McCrosky, 1998). Consequently, students are more capable of constructively responding to comments and more likely to revise and improve their speeches if they receive feedback while they are in the process of developing their speeches, invoking a Bakhtinian sense of responsive understanding. However, it is important that the instructor make it clear to the students that the comments on the outlines are focused on only a few of the most significant changes that will improve the quality of the speech. The comments are not comprehensive and only address baseline concerns; making only the suggested changes does not necessarily guarantee the student an A.

Peer Workshops

A third strategy for creating a more dialogic classroom is to incorporate peer workshops into the speech development process. Wood (1996) argues that the basic course is a good place to teach participation skills, and points out that this requires (a) a clear, flexible definition, (b) effective feedback, and (c) valuing students’

ideas. However, because this process also helps students develop small group communication skills while working together and learn to incorporate decision-making steps into the communication process, it is also an ideal pedagogical tool to adapt for hybrid, small group, or interpersonal communication courses.

By working together to develop their ideas while participating in peer workshops, students will learn from one another and push each other to greater levels of mutual understanding. Peer workshops increase the responsive understanding and dialogue between students, and just as Bakhtin suggests, a multiple of perspectives emerge as individual voices are given greater opportunity to be heard (Ritchie in Ewald, 1993). Because all students are equal participants in shaping the dialogue, a more democratic environment similar to the one advocated for by Dewey is achieved, as compared to a much more controlled classroom structure in which all “dialogue” is determined by the teacher. Perhaps most importantly, though, by entering discussion with the other (in this case classmates who are audience members), students will have the opportunity to respond to one another and negotiate shared meaning. That is, by talking to members of their particular audience, students will have a chance to develop and clarify their ideas together, which will lead to better speech performances. Hopefully, such interchange will assure that the message interpreted by the audience resembles closely the message the speaker intended before the students deliver their speech presentations.

Additionally, peer workshops will help students attain a better understanding of the theoretical concepts presented in the course and better see how those con-

cepts relate directly to practice. By asking students to utilize the vocabulary of the textbook when discussing their own and peers' speeches, students help each other directly connect the theory to their own work. By negotiating the meanings of the theory together while applying it to their own experience, students are able to gain from one another's strengths and are better able to internalize those concepts through use.

Though peer workshops have not previously been used in most public speaking classes, they have become an integral part of many writing courses, and extensive research exists about the effective use of peer workshops in composition classes. When students use peer workshops to give and receive feedback, they gain a greater understanding of the grading procedures and standards and then begin to apply those standards to their own work (Reeves, 1997; Shaw, 2001). A network is created between the students that causes them to learn from and compete against each other, ultimately leading to better assignments because they want to impress their peers (Shaw, 2001). Students become more reflective about the writing process. Moreover, through the improvements they experience in repeatedly critiquing and refining their work, students will be able to see that writing (or speaking, in this case) is a learned process and refinable skill, not just a natural gift that only certain people have (Charney, Newman, & Palmquist, 1995; Mondock, 1997; Reeves, 1997). Clear critiques, whether from peers in a workshop or from the instructor, help students to make internal attributions rather than external ones, which "caus[es] them to take responsibility of the performances and undertak[e] appropriate change" (Booth-Butterfield, 1989). It puts stu-

dents at the level of the instructor and helps them become better critical thinkers capable of making scholarly decisions and professional judgments (Shaw, 2001). Finally, the use of a workshop process, especially one in which students also receive feedback from their instructors, leads to a decrease in public speaking anxiety (Ellis, 1995).

However, simply putting students into groups and asking them to work together to improve their speeches can be counterproductive. Baker and Campbell (2005) point out that cooperative learning “can actually reinforce wrong thinking when group members misunderstand concepts or procedures” (p. 5). To be successful, any type of group work must be carefully planned and monitored by the instructor. In order to make any cooperative learning effort effective in an undergraduate class, Baker and Campbell suggest that teachers 1) assign groups, including a mixture of students who have high levels of ability and students who have high levels of self-efficacy in each group, 2) provide immediate feedback through assignments, discussion, and listening to group discussions, and 3) monitor group processes to make sure they are working, provide help when they are not, and reward performance.

Peer workshops for written compositions and speeches require even more specialized planning and monitoring than other group work in classes. Spear (1993) and Atwell (1998) provide considerable practical advice for teachers who are trying to incorporate peer workshops into their classes. Both authors emphasize the importance of creating a comfortable classroom environment and developing feelings of trust, safety, and camaraderie so that students will be more responsive to

one another. Both suggest using role-playing or modeling exercises before the first “real” workshop to facilitate discussion about what types of comments are and are not helpful. Atwell and Spear further suggest listing rules for workshops that are developed together as a class and recommend developing a vocabulary to talk *about* writing (or in our case, speaking) from the beginning of the class and constantly utilizing that vocabulary. They also highlight the importance of assigning workshop groups rather than letting students choose their own groups, suggest having students provide both written and oral feedback, and emphasize the importance of having the instructor circulate through the classroom to confer with students during the workshop. While commenting on the value of peer workshops in the student learning process, Atwell (1998) says:

In the day-to-day workings of a workshop, kids ask for help, make decisions, set plans and goals, and form judgments. They learn how to look at what they’ve done and what they need to do next. They learn how to articulate what they understand and recognize where they’re still on shaky ground. (p. 301)

These behaviors should be goals for any class, especially classes that include a performance element, as is the case for public speaking.

Peer Evaluations

The responsiveness between students should extend through and beyond the speech performance, so a fourth dialogic teaching strategy is to incorporate peer evaluations of the speech performances into the course. I sug-

gest that peer evaluations be used as a tool by which students to respond to one another, not as the means by which student speeches are graded. These evaluations should include questions about specific elements of the speech and should require each student to articulate both the strengths and the areas in which the speaker can improve. This will allow students to respond to each other's speeches after they have been revised, to receive feedback from a diversity of perspectives, and will compel them to be more attentive and reflective as they listen to one another speak. This also extends the classroom dialogue between peers through the entire speech development process instead of limiting formal dialogue to a single class session.

These four strategies can be introduced into the basic course individually or simultaneously, but because these tactics work together as a dialogic approach to public speaking, they work best as a unified system. Table 1 shows a generic schedule that can be used to incorporate all four components into the course for any speaking assignment.

Moreover, these pedagogical strategies should be seen only as a starting point for creating dialogic classrooms. We should be reflexive in our thinking about teaching and should consider other ways to invite dialogue into the classroom. For example, after a year of using these strategies in my own classes, I began to incorporate written student reflections after each speech performance to give students an opportunity to articulate what they learned from the process, to consider how their experience of what did and did not work well in their own and others' speeches can help them in their next assignment, to evaluate their progress and set

Table 1
Generic Schedule for Incorporating
Dialogic Strategies as a System

Day 1	Give students a copy of the grading rubric and use it to explain the speech assignment and criteria by which the speech performance will be evaluated. Encourage students to use the criteria as a checklist to make sure that they are meeting the assignment expectations as they prepare their outlines.
Day 2	Speech outlines due. Students should bring two copies of their completed outline to class. One should be given to the instructor, who should then provide written feedback on the outline. The other should be used in the peer workshop.
Day 3	Return student outlines with instructor feedback to the students. Instructors might want to conduct a second peer workshop in which students practice their speeches and give each other additional feedback.
Day 4	Speech performance day. Students should provide feedback through peer evaluations while the instructor evaluates the speech and provides feedback on the grading rubric.
Day 5	Return rubrics with grades and feedback. Give students peer evaluations written by classmates. Encourage students to read and reflect on the comments and to consider how they can use what they learned from the speech they just completed as they prepare for their next speaking assignment. Instructors might want to ask students to write reflections about their own speech performances in which students will articulate what they feel they did well and what they would like to improve in their next speech.

Note: This schedule is intended to establish a time order for implementing the strategies. Instructors might want to allow extra class periods between the time that the speech is assigned and when the outlines are due. Also, most classes will need more than one class period for all students to give their speeches. Depending on the length of a class period, most instructors will want to use part of the class period for instruction on course material and part of the class period for the activities listed here.

goals, and to provide feedback to the instructor. Reflection on the value of dialogism also led me to invite more student interaction during class lectures and to share more examples of work that illustrated the evaluation criteria with students. Future studies should consider ways that online venues (such as message boards or chat rooms) can be used to create class dialogue or to consider ways that similar strategies can be used for other types of courses and assignments.

CONCLUSION

Jo Sprague wrote, "For the majority of communication scholars pedagogy is our praxis" (1993, p. 6). Communication theory should not just live on the pages of our textbooks to be filed away in our students' minds until the final exam has been taken; communication theory should transform the way we think about the world and should be used consciously to frame our decisions about how we live and teach. Theory should be connected to experience, and nowhere is that more important than in the public speaking course where students are supposed to be learning basic communication theory and applying it in their speech performances. The public speaking classroom is a critical test site in which valid theory merged with praxis allows us to teach better speaking practice, which in turn furthers theory and advances the discipline. By utilizing dialogic theory in the strategies we use to teach the basic public speaking course, we can help students gain a better understanding of the concepts and theories that form the foundation of the class. We can also make the content

more meaningful by connecting it more clearly to their speaking performances and their everyday experiences.

However, care should be taken in the means by which such strategies are incorporated, especially since public speaking courses are taught at many universities by graduate students who are gaining their first experience as instructors. The shift in roles from student to instructor can be challenging at first. And this difficulty is doubled when trying to use nontraditional techniques that one has rarely or never seen utilized in other classes. Thus, it is important to take time to train new teachers on how to use these strategies effectively and how to maintain a comfortable balance of control in more interactive dialogic classrooms. This balance is particularly important when encouraging teachers to incorporate peer workshops into the speech development process. Achieving facilitative control requires both training teachers to lead workshop sessions and training teachers to train the students about how to participate in and provide helpful feedback in the workshop sessions. Since most faculty in our discipline gain their first teaching experience in the basic course, taking time to train basic course instructors to use teaching alternatives and to reflect on dialogic pedagogy could potentially impact the way subsequent courses are taught.

Finally, Bakhtin is just one of many theorists whose ideas can inform our public speaking pedagogy. Other theorists, including Goffman, Bruner, Bateson, Foss, and many others can and should inform our teaching practices in equally important ways. We need to become more reflective about ways in which theory can influence pedagogy and find strategies for putting those

ideas into practice. Doing so will answer Dewey's call for a more active and constructive education process.

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